DEEP SEA MINING A DISTURBING NEW THREAT TO MY HOME

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Body

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Deep sea mining companies are currently out in the Pacific carrying out tests in an attempt to prove their industry is safe for the environment. A few weeks ago, one of those companies, GSR, lost control of a 25-tonne robot at the bottom of the ocean. Bearing witness to this and confronting this industry at sea is Victor Pickering, a Fijian activist onboard Greenpeace's Rainbow Warrior ship.

"I was born a child of the ocean. Growing up in Fiji, the ocean has influenced every part of me. From the food that nourished me, to how I spent my days swimming and diving.

For us in the Pacific Islands, the ocean is our connection to one another. We recognize the ocean as part of our identity and wellbeing. We are the ocean, and the ocean is us.

The beauty of this vast blue Pacific drove me to study marine resource management and fisheries, and I have since dedicated my life to environmental activism, because I believe my people deserve a voice on these issues that are affecting our communities already.

It is all of this that has brought me here, hundreds of nautical miles into the middle of the Pacific, onboard the Greenpeace Rainbow Warrior. I'm here to bear witness to an emerging industry that poses a huge threat to the Pacific and the world at large deep sea mining.

Out here in the Clarion Clipperton Zone, about 1,000 nautical miles off the west coast of Mexico, international mining companies are racing to start operations. These companies, headquartered in the Global North, are patrolling the sea and testing their equipment as we speak, eager to access the riches of the depths.

Despite evidence that we can recycle rather than replace our tech, they are jumping to mine the deep sea rather than take sustainable approaches to challenges.

In the past few weeks, I have watched as mining vessels paraded their machines, and there's plenty more where they came from. They simply don't belong here.

Already so much has changed for the ocean I call home. There has been an unprecedented amount of coral bleaching, fish populations have declined drastically meaning we have to go further out and spend more hours just trying to catch a meal for our families. The ocean is under serious pressure, and everyone from coastal communities to scientists are telling us so.

The crisis our blue planet faces, from sea level rise, industrially depleted fish populations, plastic pollution and now deep sea mining are not abstract concepts or shocking headlines, these are impacts that are already being felt by

Pacific communities. Deep sea mining is an added pressure the ocean cannot afford, and nor can the people for which it is a lifeline.

As we sail this vast blue Pacific, I have felt the pull of my home in Fiji, thousands of miles to the West, and am struck by the way this ocean connects us all. We are people of the sea, and we cannot stand by as big mining companies walk in and take what they like leaving the Pacific and its people to deal with the consequences.

Scientists have warned us that deep sea mining would cause irreversible damage to the marine ecosystem, and that it would take millennia for it to recover. This new industry is already investing millions into preparations to plunder the deep.

But resistance is growing.

My Pacific Island brothers and sisters are already fighting to ban deep sea mining, to draw a Pacific Blue Line against the latest threat exported from the West. From Vanuatu to Fiji, the Cook Islands to Tonga and Papua New Guinea, activists are sounding the alarm and I stand in solidarity with them. We must make decision makers shift mindsets away from industrial exploitation and towards protection, and make the deep sea off limits to mining.

Will you stand in solidarity with us Pacific Islanders? In 2021, governments will meet again to negotiate the future of global oceans. We must call on them to agree on a strong Global Ocean Treaty that will pave the way to put at least 30% of the oceans off limits from greedy industries by 2030, and set high protection standards. It's time decision makers shift away from industrial exploitation towards ocean protection.

If the ocean is the blue heart of our planet, we and sea life are its beats. We cannot let deep sea mining destroy the symphony."

Greenpeace supports a worldwide ban on deep sea mining.

Victor Pickering is activist and seafarer on board the Rainbow Warrior.

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